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Straight Talk on the Future of Jobs in Pennsylvania

The Breathe Project and FracTracker Alliance released a fact sheet today refuting the conflated numbers being touted by pro-fossil fuel organizations and political candidates regarding fracking jobs in Pennsylvania. In some cases, the natural gas jobs in the state have been inflated by 3500 percent.

The exaggerated job figures are the latest attempt of a struggling industry to claim currency as an economic strategy. In the past oil majors and analysts had over-optimistically predicted big profits on petrochemicals, expecting demand in the sector to drive price increases, profits and growth. Economic analyses now show that the petrochemical industry is slowly collapsing due to the oversupply of plastics, falling prices, unpredictable industry costs and other factors.

The result is the natural gas industry and fracking boom have failed to deliver the job growth and prosperity that was predicted by industry proponents a decade ago.

“The economic development decisions of a decade ago were based on assumptions that wildly overstated the jobs and economic potential of the oil and gas industry,” said Matt Mehalik, executive director of the Breathe Project. “The reality of today shows how weak the prospects have turned out to be. Nine Appalachian shale drillers have lost more than \$1.1 billion over the past 12 months, with continued heavy losses in the second quarter of 2020, despite attempts to cut expenses. This cyclical industry is engaged in layoffs and equipment yard sales, hardly the middle class sustaining prospects industry likes to pretend are ubiquitous.”

In terms of job numbers, the facts show:

- Analysis shows that the number of jobs in the natural gas industry in Pennsylvania has never totaled more than 30,000 over the last five years and is now less than that due to the industry’s economic decline and layoffs.

- The numbers were inflated because industry-backed job figures included service providers and suppliers to the industry, such as architects, engineers, restaurants and physicians who care for workers. Industry analyses also included broad swaths of manufacturing industries including “fertilizer manufacturing,” convenience store workers, and gas station workers. Many of those jobs existed before the boom, indicating that their longevity is not dependent on the fracking industry.
- As a point of comparison, in 2019, close to 1 million state residents were working in healthcare, 222,600 in education, and over 590,000 in state government.
- The Dept. of Energy’s U.S. Energy and Employment Report (2017) and E2 Clean Jobs Pennsylvania Report (2019) shows that clean energy jobs in Pennsylvania employ twice as many people as the fossil fuel industry.

“From trends in Pennsylvania and many other states, it’s clear that jobs thrive in a restoration economy focused on renewables, equity, efficiency, green infrastructure and sustainability,” said Brook Lenker, executive director of FracTracker Alliance. “The financial, health, and climate burdens of pollution are diminished. People and nature prosper. Why would we want it any other way?”

The **Straight Talk on the Future of Jobs in Pennsylvania** fact sheet is available [here](#).